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"God is Dead" (Nietzsche), but What is the ”Fate” of the Human Soul? How Might Philosophical Anthropology Respond

Friedrich Nietzsche, one of the greatest German philosophers of the 19th century, famously declared through a character in his work, "God is dead". This iconic phrase reflected an increasingly widespread reality and idea at the time: the rapid scientific progress, growing rationality, and the decline of religious faith among the masses, the Western world seemed to be entering a new era – an era without God, in which scientific truth, nature, reason, and technology gradually began to replace religion and belief in divinity and supernatural forces. Nietzsche’s declaration thus signaled the end of an era, a socio-cultural model, and a way of perceiving human existence, human nature, the meaning of life, personal fulfillment, education, and more.

These major transformations inevitably raised revolutionary questions and challenges that demanded new philosophical and scientific solutions, increasingly necessary as society advanced into the contemporary age, often labeled as being *science- and technology-based*. Some of these questions, challenges, and the need for solutions and reconsiderations concern *the "fate" of the human soul*, now left "orphaned" by the "death" of its religious "parent." Here are a few such questions:

- Does the "death of God" also signify the end or decline of the human soul and the spirituality, traditionally associated with religion and divinity?
- Is the human soul merely an invention of religion and mystical thought, destined to disappear with their decline, or is it an integral part of human nature, essence, and condition, requiring continued existence?
- If the soul is a fundamental part of human existence, how might it evolve or be redefined in a secular world, strongly oriented toward science and technology?
- Can we still preserve the authentic meaning of the soul, detached from traditional religious interpretations, and ensure its continued relevance for the major anthropo-philosophical categories: the human nature, essence and condition, the meaning of life, human fulfillment, happiness, work, and so on?

The list of questions and challenges is, of course, much longer.

This new historical situation, which brings to the forefront also issues related to the human nature, essence, and condition, urgently calls for the involvement of a boundary-spanning humanistic discipline – namely, philosophical anthropology – and, by extension, other anthropological disciplines such as social anthropology, educational anthropology, cultural antropology, anthropology of work and human activity. Through these, other significant anthropo-cosmological concepts, such as education, work, and everyday life, also come under analysis and scrutiny.

However, before exploring the issues associated with these anthropo-cosmological categories, philosophical anthropology must first engage with and address explanatory aspects and challenges specifically related to the fate of the human soul and spirituality – particularly concerning the impact

of secularization and technological advancements (cybernetics, robotics, digitization). In correlation, it must seek to approach and propose solutions to questions such as:

- Could the secularization and technologization of society and humanity lead to a fundamental shift in how we conceive of the soul and human spirituality?
- As artificial intelligence becomes increasingly autonomous and capable, might humans reassess their core values, principles, and beliefs, and, as a result, consider spirituality and soul-related values as outdated?
- Could the collaboration between humans and technology lead to new spiritual and soulful constructs and extraordinary achievements that significantly enhance the spiritual and soulful quality of human life?
- Might accelerated technological progress and the technologization of society and humanity lead to a new understanding of life and human existence, or a revision of this understanding based on a new form of spirituality, aligned with a different kind of human soul?
- Could secularization, science, and technology lead to the complete de-spiritualization of the human being and the decline or end of the human soul? Is this process inevitable or irreversible?

From here, philosophical anthropology can advance toward the major anthropo-philosophical and anthropo-cosmological categories affected by the process of de-spiritualization and the decline of the human soul. In this context, it is essential to explore questions and issues such as:

- How do science and technology alter the traditional understanding of human nature, the meaning, and purpose of life, by replacing spirituality with materialism and technologism?
- Can traditional spiritual values be reconciled with the new technological and economic realities, leading to a reconsideration of the human condition?
- What are the anthropo-ethical implications of the fusion between humans and machines in the absence of a soulful, spiritual dimension?
- Could new forms of spirituality emerge, and with them, new definitions of human life in a technology-dominated world?
- How does the decline of spirituality impact happiness, personal fulfillment, education, and work in a technologized era, considering that happiness and personal satisfaction primarily manifest at the level of – and through – the human soul?

Philosophical anthropology, as we have observed, can raise many questions; however, when it comes to identifying or proposing answers and solutions, the range of possibilities is much more limited. Nevertheless, in this endeavor, philosophical anthropology should, in our view, operate with determination in two primary directions. One should be oriented toward science, particularly psychology, and the other toward technology.

Regarding its collaboration with psychology, philosophical anthropology should begin by acknowledging that psychology has made – and continues to make – a significant error by excluding the soul (as the seat of sentiments, passions, love, attachments, etc.) from its field of research and the theoretical models it uses to represent human personality and the human being as a whole. This exclusion largely stems from the soul's close association with religion, being perceived as an outdated subject of study, similar to religion, which is assumed to have "invented" it, ignoring the fact that the soul can and should be analyzed independently of religion. In addressing these errors in psychology, philosophical anthropology should highlight that psychology studies and models other psychic spheres, such as the self, consciousness, will, motivation, character, etc., which also cannot be directly observed but are only presumed or hypothesized. These are nonetheless accepted within the field of psychology and studied. So why should the soul be excluded from psychological discourse? Its total and "discriminatory" exclusion from research and debate may deprive psychology of an authentic, holistic, and deeper understanding of what it truly means to be a complete human psychic system, a human personality, a human being. These are fundamental to the major anthropo-philosophical categories – such as human nature, essence, and condition – that are defined by the body-mind-soul triad.

Regarding philosophical anthropology's relationship with technology, the range of questions and challenges, as we have noted, is vast, covering many fields and issues. To identify solutions and proposals that help preserve, as much as possible, the essence of humanity – particularly the soulful,

spiritual dimension – philosophical anthropology must collaborate with other anthropological disciplines. These may include social anthropology, educational anthropology, cultural anthropology, as well as the anthropology of work and human activities.

Philosophical anthropology, in collaboration with social anthropology, can warn against the risk of desensitization and the loss of empathy within communities, particularly in families and professional organizations, as authentic human interactions are increasingly replaced by technological ones. It is essential to promote socio-human values that preserve a humanistic vision of communities. At the same time, a balance must be struck between technological progress and respect for humanity and spirituality within these communities, identifying solutions for authentic human coexistence in a society increasingly dominated by technology.

In the fields of education and culture, philosophical anthropology, alongside educational and cultural anthropologies, must contribute to preserving humanity and spirituality in the educational and cultural act. Educational programs across all fields need to include, in addition to exact sciences and technology, disciplines that ensure a deep understanding of the spiritual and cultural dimensions of human existence. Cultural and spiritual values must be integrated at every stage of education. Cultural anthropology can provide authentic human models and values to counterbalance the effects of technologization, while cultural institutions must remain spaces for genuine human creation and development. Thus, education and culture can safeguard authentic values in the face of increasingly invasive, de-spiritualizing, and dehumanizing technological progress.

The anthropology of work and human activity, guided by philosophical reflection, must explore the impact of technology on work and daily life. While proponents of technological futurism enthusiastically argue that technology will liberate us, envisioning a future where automation, digitization, and robotics create more free time for personal and spiritual development, offering opportunities to explore passions and rediscover ourselves, philosophical anthropology – along with the anthropology of work and human activity – must raise an important caution. A grim possibility exists: a future world inhabited by soulless people, where, despite being freed from the burden of repetitive labor, individuals may become mere cogs in a mechanical existence. In such a world, the pulse of humanity would be replaced by a sterile hum, and crowded streets would be filled with lifeless faces, with empty eyes and expressionless features. The soul, once the center of human essence, might be abandoned in the pursuit of efficiency and technological progress.

In this future, the authentic meaning of life might no longer be sought, considered irrelevant. Conversations could lose their depth, reduced to mere exchanges of information without substance. Art and music, once reflections of the human soul, could be degraded to commercial products devoid of genuine emotion. People might begin to resemble their machines, living solely for functionality, not for profound soulful experiences. Without the soul, such a society would no longer truly be alive. Instead of enlightenment, progress could bring about a spiritual darkness – a tragic decline of the human spirit. In the face of this potential bleak future, the blind enthusiasm for technological futurism must be tempered with a crucial question:

- Is this the world we truly desire?

Philosophical anthropology can directly address those who, in their "schizophrenic" fervor for unchecked technological progress, fail to see the potential dangers of a dehumanized and de-spiritualized world, a society populated by soulless individuals or souls scarred beyond recognition, by posing direct questions such as:

- How will you experience the emotion of walking your child to their first day of kindergarten or school if your soul can no longer feel that joy?
- How will you celebrate when you land that much-coveted job if you no longer have an inner source of enthusiasm?
- How will you truly love the person you've chosen to spend your life with if your soul has been reduced to a mere algorithm?
- How will you rejoice when your favorite team scores the decisive point if your soul is frozen or paralyzed?

- How will you admire a breathtaking painting or feel the triumph of a hero on stage or in a film if your mind and heart, emptied of the soul, no longer resonate with beauty and the triumph of good?
- How will you give and feel the joy of helping someone in need if you lack the inner impulse that makes such gestures possible?
- How will you experience the joy of a new sunrise, that rush of emotion that quickens your heartbeat and lights up your eyes, if your soul has become nothing more than a deep scar?

And finally, two decisive questions:

- ➢ Or perhaps, are you willing to give up joy?
- ➢ Do you no longer want to feel joy?

And, if the answer to these questions is that you still want to be able to enjoy, not to end up having a life without joy, without emotion, without love and without soul, without meaning, then maybe the future you project for us it should be reconsidered, reconfigured, so as to preserve, even in the face of inevitable technological progress, that fundamental element of the existence and life of each of us that makes joy possible: the Human Soul.